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GOVERNING COUNCIL

Organizational meeting for 1991

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 19 February 1991, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. POPESCU (Romania)

President: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the organizational meeting of the Governing Council for 1991, and welcomed the newly elected members of the Council.

2. In decision 90/34, the Governing Council approved by consensus the indicative planning figures (IPFs) for the fifth programming cycle (1992-1996). While the Council had fallen well short of the target, there was, however, still hope for an upward revision of IPFs during the fifth programming cycle. The results of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, held in November 1990, were particularly important because the 1992-1996 IPFs were based on 1991 resources.

3. Governing Council decision 90/21, on national execution, and Council decision 90/26, on agency support costs, had been adopted after long and intensive negotiations. The Council looked forward to the Administrator's progress report on the implementation of Governing Council decision 90/21. In its decision 90/23, the Council had once again sought to find new mechanisms for making its work more efficient.

4. The high-level segment of the Council's debates in June 1990 had given rise to a broad spectrum of views on fundamental issues of concern to the future of UNDP and multilateral cooperation for development. Many delegations had underscored the leading role of UNDP in the technical cooperation system; that role must be strengthened in the 1990s. Considerable emphasis had been placed on national execution and full utilization of national capacities, as well as on successor arrangements for agency support costs. There had been broad support for the greater use of technical cooperation among developing countries and for the Programme's promotion of human development.

5. The challenges which the Governing Council had faced in 1990 were undoubtedly among the most formidable in its history, and he thanked the members of the Council for the high degree of cooperation they had shown. At its current session, the Council would continue its efforts to strengthen UNDP.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

6. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited the Council to elect a Bureau consisting of a President and four Vice-Presidents, due account being taken, in accordance with rule 11 of the rules of procedure, of the need to ensure equitable geographical representation. Due regard should be given to the geographical rotation of the office of President among the different regional groups.

7. According to that principle, the President of the Governing Council for 1991 should be elected from among the members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group

(The Temporary President)

of States. That Group had nominated Mr. Píriz-Ballón (Uruguay) for the office of the President.

8. Mr. Píriz-Ballón (Uruguay) was elected President by acclamation.

9. Mr. Píriz-Ballón (Uruguay) took the Chair.

10. The PRESIDENT said that the purpose of UNDP was to forge a better world based on the eradication of underdevelopment, which could lead to a genuine spirit of universal solidarity. The success of the Council's current session would largely depend on the success of the fifth programming cycle. The Council must take decisions on the allocation of Special Programme Resources and on the implementation of its decision on agency support costs, and must give form and content to the mandate of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters. Finally, the Council must take further steps to rationalize its work.

11. The following candidates had been nominated by their respective regional groups for election as Vice-Presidents of the Council: Mr. Kramer (Canada) by the Group of Western European and Other States, Mr. Umer (Pakistan) by the Group of Asian and Pacific States and Mr. Jasiński (Poland) by the Group of Eastern European States. Consultations were still in progress among the African States concerning nomination of a candidate. He suggested that the Council should return to the election of officers at an appropriate time. In the meantime, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to elect by acclamation the three candidates he had named.

12. Mr. Kramer (Canada), Mr. Umer (Pakistan) and Mr. Jasiński (Poland) were elected Vice-Presidents by acclamation.

13. The PRESIDENT said that he would convene a meeting of the Bureau shortly in order to discuss the assignment of tasks to the Vice-Presidents. In accordance with Council decision 81/37, the Bureau and the Administrator were requested to hold consultations with Member States both before and during the sessions of the Council in order to facilitate the completion of the Council's work. He intended to make full use of such consultations.

STATEMENT BY THE ADMINISTRATOR

14. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) said that, in many ways, 1991 would be a very important year for the United Nations. Although the confrontational aspects of the cold war had disappeared, local conflicts persisted. Moreover, the outbreak of war in the Middle East posed unprecedented challenges to the world community and to UNDP. For the United Nations, the main challenge was to link the issues of peace, security and development in the post-war period and, by so doing, to heal the wounds of war.

15. As the lead agency of the United Nations development system, UNDP should focus on reconstruction and development in the aftermath of war. He had established a

(Mr. Draper)

Gulf task force led by the Regional Bureau for Arab States and Europe. The task force was exploring various approaches to guide the actions of the Programme during and after the crisis. The Programme was also responding to the Security Council's appeal to the agencies of the United Nations system to review their programmes of assistance to those countries affected as a result of compliance with the sanctions. The Secretary-General had asked UNDP to report to him regularly on its activities to alleviate the hardships confronting those countries.

16. Major changes would be taking place as a result of the decisions taken by the Governing Council in June 1990. At the current session, the Council would be considering the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, agency support costs, and the specific amounts for Special Programme Resources (SPR) programmes.

17. The Governing Council had adopted a budget strategy emphasizing cost-effectiveness, which would be reflected in the budget to be presented at the thirty-eighth session. In addition, the Kienbaum report on a strategy-based senior management structure for UNDP had been completed. In accordance with paragraph 7 of Council decision 90/45, he would present his comments on the study at informal consultations prior to the thirty-eighth session.

18. If UNDP was to have the required impact on development, it would be necessary to raise the level of contributions to UNDP, and he called upon all members of UNDP to cooperate in the task of fund raising. The Council's decision to increase resources by 8 per cent in real terms for the fifth programming cycle was a major commitment, and all donors and recipients should redouble their efforts to meet and surpass that target.

19. Many significant items on the Council's agenda for 1991 underscored the importance of maintaining the spirit of consensus which had characterized deliberations in past years. The concerted efforts of all the members of the Council would help improve the effectiveness of its work.

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

20. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director, UNFPA) said that it was encouraging to see that practically all the developing countries were moving vigorously ahead with comprehensive and multisectoral population and development programmes. The need for assistance was great and, despite some recent increases in current dollar terms, the means at the disposal of UNFPA remained very limited. The Fund's income in 1990 had been $212 million, well below what was needed. For the first time, the Fund would have no unspent resources to carry forward to 1991 and it might even have to draw temporarily from the operational reserve to cover all commitments. For 1991, UNFPA income was estimated at $237 million, an increase of 12 per cent over 1990. However, the needs were greater still; requests for programme funding now amounted to over $360 million.

21. One of the Fund's top priorities in 1991 would be the mobilization of resources in support of population activities, particularly in the most affected

and poorest countries. It would be tragic if the world did not respond to calls for assistance from countries which were prepared to carry out well-conceived and effective cooperation programmes. The fund-raising goal of UNFPA was to reach $500 million in the period 1994-1995 and $1 billion in the year 2000. The Fund needed the support of all its members to meet that challenge. In that regard, she was particularly pleased to note that the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) had expressed their willingness to help developing countries to establish, fund and implement effective population strategies and programmes as a matter of priority.

22. During the current year priority was being given to efforts to promote coordination and collaboration with Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, inter alia, by trying to synchronize all UNFPA programmes of assistance with government planning cycles and the programme cycles of United Nations organizations, and trying to cooperate closely with other agencies substantively involved in the maternal and child health and family planning field, most notably UNICEF and the World Health Organization. Another priority was UNFPA's contribution to preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED); it was hoped that UNDP would support efforts to ensure that the population dimension was addressed adequately at the Conference.

23. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 1987/72 on follow-up to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population, UNFPA had prepared two reports for the forthcoming meeting of the Population Commission, one on the activities of the Fund, the other on the monitoring of multilateral population assistance. The Commission, as the Preparatory Committee for the 1994 international meeting on population, would be considering a report prepared by the Secretary-General of the meeting, suggesting issues for discussion at the meeting and reviewing the nature of preparatory work, organizational arrangements and financial implications.

24. In addition to its regular reports, UNFPA would be submitting a number of documents of special importance to the Council at its thirty-eighth session, including one on proposed successor arrangements for agency support costs. UNFPA's objectives for those arrangements were to improve countries' access to relevant technical knowledge, analysis and research within the United Nations system, to provide an integrated and coordinated approach to population matters and to accelerate self-reliance within countries by fostering and strengthening national and regional expertise and creating a closer link between research and operational activities. UNFPA proposed to support technical assistance requirements at the national, regional and headquarters levels: at national level, greater reliance on national expertise and institutions would be promoted, at regional level country programme technical support teams were proposed, and at the headquarters of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, it was proposed that there should be a small number of specialists providing technical support to teams in the regions and investigating the availability of relevant knowledge and know-how within the United

(Mrs. Sadik)

Nations system. A consensus on the proposal had been reached with the specialized agencies concerned, while discussions were still continuing on certain issues with the Secretariat and the Regional Commissions of the United Nations itself. Inter-agency meetings and consultations had been held which had considered in detail, in a constructive and cooperative manner, the substantive and financial elements of the new arrangements.

25. With regard to the agenda and the organization of the work of the Council, she noted with satisfaction the proposal that at least one and one-half days should be set aside at the thirty-eighth session for discussion by the Standing Committee on Programme Matters of programme matters related to UNFPA, and she hoped that the Council would devote an equivalent amount of time to discussion of UNFPA in plenary.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (DP/1991/L.1)

26. Mr. BORJA DE NOZOTA (France) expressed surpise that no provision had been made for a drafting group or for practical arrangements such as interpretation services, for discussing the very important questions of Special Programme Resources and the progress report on agency support costs referred to in agenda items.

27. Mr. ROHMER (Switzerland) pointed out that although the agenda under discussion was the agenda for the organizational meeting, it contained one item concerning the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, which would probably lead to a decision, and might therefore require the convening of a drafting group.

28. Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary of the Governing Council) said that the matters raised by the representative of France would be dealt with when the agenda for the special session was discussed. He confirmed, however, that there was no provision for discussion of the topics in question to take place at a meeting held parallel to the special session; the Council had never in the past held such meetings as they would have financial implications which would require the approval of the United Nations Committee on Conferences. Informal consultations would take place within the period of the Council's session, but without interpretation; if interpretation services were required then the Council would have to adjourn for the informal discussions. The establishment of committees was a matter that was best dealt with informally, by the Bureau, which would try to decide on the appropriate methods for drafting decisions during the course of the meeting.

29. Ms. DUDIK-GAYOSO (United States of America) pointed out that the meeting would have some complicated decisions to take which would require a considerable amount of hard work on the part of all members of the Council. She did not consider that matters could be resolved on an ad hoc basis.

30. Mr. JASIŃSKI (Poland), Vice-President, pointed out that items 4 and 5 dealt with interrelated matters and suggested that they might be discussed together; alternatively, delegations wishing to comment on both items might make a single intervention.

31. Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary) said that there was also a close link between items 4 and 5 and item 6. However, to consider them all together could lead to difficulties with regard to decisions. From the point of view of the rationalization of work it would be better to deal with those items individually.

32. The PRESIDENT said that as he heard no objection he took it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda for the organizational meeting as contained in document DP/1991/L.1.

33. It was so decided.

RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (DP/1991/3)

34. Mr. KIRDAR (Secretary of the Governing Council), introducing document DP/1991/3, said that the question of the rationalization of the work of the Council had become a recurring and major feature of the agenda of the organizational meetings. The Council, in paragraphs 6 to 8 of decision 90/23, referring to its working methods, had requested the Administrator to examine the possibility of reducing the number and length of documents presented to the Council and to biennialize or even triennialize specific items and the high-level debate of the Governing Council; it had also requested the Administrator to indicate in his reports any actions proposed, including their financial and administrative implications; and it had requested the Council to limit the number of preambular paragraphs of its decisions of the Governing Council. Rather than attempt to formulate a comprehensive catalogue of measures, similar to the prescriptions of decision 81/37, many of which had not yet been fully implemented, the Administration would be putting forward concrete proposals for improving the work of the Governing Council during the year ahead.

35. In 1981, the Council had decided that, whenever required, short sessions might be held, immediately before or after regular sessions, to examine specific matters; thus special sessions held in conjunction with the regular sessions of the Governing Council were envisaged as an option, not as a rule. It was strongly suggested that the Council might therefore in future avoid suggesting that specific matters be discussed at special sessions held in conjunction with the organizational meeting.

36. In order to make debates at the thirty-eighth session less time-consuming, the draft provisional agenda (DP/1991/L.3) had been reduced by clustering related subjects to produce a total of 26 items and sub-items compared with 71 the previous year, with a single introduction for each item or sub-item. According to present plans the number of documents before the Council would be reduced from 169 in 1990 to 116 in 1991; it was also hoped to reduce the total number of pages of UNDP reports by more than half. The clustering of subjects would also facilitate a clustering of decisions.

37. With regard to biennialization it was proposed that the Council should, on an experimental basis, dispense with the general debate in budget years thereby making a three-week session possible. Some reduction in the number of items through

(Mr. Kirdar)

biennialization or even triennialization had already been achieved as a result of the Council having adopted fewer decisions in 1990 than in 1989 and limited requests for reports. The proposed clustering of subjects into a very few agenda items should prove helpful in that respect also. He drew attention to paragraphs 9 and 10 of document DP/1991/3, concerning the drafting of decisions and also to paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 concerning the possible biennialization of the high-level policy reviews.

38. Mr. CABEIRO QUINTANA (Cuba) said that the measures proposed in document DP/1991/3 would be acceptable only if the Council continued to receive all necessary information, and if reduction of documentation and biennialization did not come to represent ends in themselves. For example, consideration of specific items should not be postponed on the grounds that it had been decided that they should be reviewed biennially. His delegation reaffirmed its support for Governing Council decision 81/37 with respect to policy issues and policy reviews (DP/1991/3, para. 11) in the high-level debate. It disagreed completely with the comment made in paragraph 12 of document DP/1991/3. The high-level debate had served a very useful purpose. Nor did his delegation agree with the provisional agenda contained in document DP/1991/L.3. The reasons cited in paragraph 13 for the proposed changes simply did not hold water. The proposals, which had been made following informal consultations, totally disregarded Council decision 90/53, which provided for a four-week session that included a high-level segment. Moreover, the Secretariat had not taken into account the fact that the high-level segment provided an opportunity for a very fruitful exchange of views among senior officials from the various countries, officials of the Secretariat, the agencies of the United Nations system and delegations. For those reasons, his delegation could not support the proposal to biennialize high-level debates.

39. Mr. PETTIT (United Kingdom) welcomed the proposals on the reduction of documentation and clustering of items, but said they might not have taken into account the documentation requirements for special sessions, particularly special sessions on substantive matters. His delegation supported the proposal to eliminate the high-level debate in 1991 on a trial basis. In that way, delegations could make general statements in connection with the annual report of the Administrator without feeling compelled to participate as they would at a high-level meeting. In conclusion, his delegation supported the proposals contained in paragraph 13 of document DP/1991/3.

40. Mr. DE BEER (Netherlands) said that document DP/1991/3 achieved a delicate balance between the need to reduce documentation and the need to provide sufficient information. The reduction in the number of pages by 50 per cent in 1991 was highly significant but not sufficient to resolve the problem. The biennialization and triennialization of specific items - greatly favoured by his delegation - would serve to highlight the importance of the matters before the Governing Council and was far preferable to dealing hastily with every single item every year. It would be extremely useful to have an overview document listing all agenda items and the year in which they would be considered - unlike document DP/1991/3, which simply mentioned that 26 agenda items would not be discussed in 1991 (para. 7). In

(Mr. De Beer, Netherlands)

conclusion, his delegation fully supported paragraph 13 concerning the high-level segment.

41. Ms. PRADEL (Germany) said that rationalization of its work would enable the Council to consider technical assistance projects more thoroughly. Her delegation welcomed the reduction in the number of documents and pages comtemplated in document DP/1991/3 and hoped that that reduction would be accompanied by a qualitative improvement in content.

42. The reduction in documents between 1990 and 1991 appeared, however, to be due, in part, to the clustering of related subjects; that was no substitute for the biennialization and triennialization of items. In that respect, her delegation fully supported the views expressed by the Danish representative. While recognizing efforts by UNDP not to exclude subjects for which reports had been requested, her delegation none the less hoped that the number of items would be brought below the current 48 figure. To that end, a timetable should be elaborated, showing those items which would still be dealt with annually, those which would be dealt with on a biennial or triennial basis, and the years in which items would be considered, as requested in Governing Council decision 90/23. Her delegation looked forward to the Administrator's proposal in that regard at the June 1991 session. In that context, her delegation would welcome the biennialization or triennialization of the items on special funds, on the implementation of selected country and inter-country programmes and some of the special programmes of assistance under United Nations technical cooperation activities.

43. The Administrator's proposal that the Governing Council should consider biennialization or triennialization when requesting reports, was sound. The timetable she had mentioned should take effect in 1991 and should be firmly adhered to, while allowing the necessary flexibility for consideration of urgent matters. Any deviations from the timetable should be brought to the attention of the Drafting Group. In order to limit the number of requests for reports, it would be helpful if the Secretariat could provide the Drafting Group with an overview of reports requested in previous years for submission at future sessions.

44. Her delegation welcomed the Administrator's proposal that the Council indicate whether a report required action or was for information purposes only. With the exception of responses to ad hoc requests, however, her delegation did not favour the presentation of oral reports. Her delegation also endorsed the Administrator's proposal concerning the biennialization of the high-level debate, noting that, as indicated in paragraph 14, it would still be possible to have an overall review of major policy issues each year.

45. Ms. ESKELINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the consideration of governance issues should go beyond the concept of rationalization to embrace the major functions of the Governing Council - i.e., the provision of policy guidance to the Administrator on general or specific issues; the appraisal, adoption and review of country programmes; and the approval and

(Ms. Eskelinen, Finland)

control of expenditures and budgets. It would be important to achieve a balance between the control exercised by Member States with respect to programme activities and the utilization of funds, on the one hand, and the latitude required by the Administrator on the other. Micro-management should be avoided and policy guidance should assist the Administrator in carrying out his responsibilities.

46. Her delegation expected the Council to take a decision on the Standing Committee for Programme Matters at the current session, complete with a programme of work and a timetable.

47. The Nordic countries broadly supported the other proposals for the rationalization of work contained in document DP/1991/3. A measure of self-discipline was also required of the Council members themselves in order to reduce the number of reports and focus the debate on issues of finance and policy guidance.

48. The Nordic countries noted with interest the Administrator's proposal concerning biennialization of the high-level debate but believed that it required further discussion.

49. Mr. KRAMER (Canada) supported the proposed measures to streamline the work of the Governing Council and agreed with the Nordic countries that Council members must also exercise self-discipline. Under item 6 of the provisional agenda, his delegation would make suggestions for deleting even more sub-items from the agenda for the June 1991 session. While the difficult preparations of the fifth programming cycle had required a special session, the practice of holding special sessions annually should be reassessed. His delegation also agreed with the representatives of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands concerning the desirability of biennializing the high-level debate. Biennialization would simply help to highlight the importance of certain issues which were often more policy-oriented and substantive than issues which were considered annually.

50. Mr. CHEKAY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted the progress achieved by the Administration in its consistent efforts to rationalize the work of the Council. His delegation found paragraph 9 of document DP/1991/3 acceptable and also supported biennializing the high-level debate. It had no objection to the presentation of oral reports, as long as oral presentation did not become the rule.

51. Clearly, the proposals for rationalization would enhance the role of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, but further clarification was required on the make-up of that Committee. The experimental nature of the proposed rationalization measures should also be borne in mind. In conclusion, timely submission of documents was extremely important and further progress must be made in that area.

52. Mr. BARAC (Romania) said that in informal negotiations in November 1990, his delegation had expressed its full support for the suggestions put forward by the Administrator with a view to reducing the number and length of documents. It had

(Mr. Barac, Romania)

also supported other suggestions concerning the rationalization of the work of the Council. It was therefore pleased to note the reductions referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 of document DP/1991/3 and hoped that the efforts to make the documentation more manageable, readable and action-oriented would continue.

53. In light of the assurance given in paragraph 14, the proposal on biennialization of the high-level debate was acceptable to his delegation.

54. Mr. JASIŃSKI (Poland) said that, as its responsibilities increase in order to meet the rising challenges of development, the Council should improve the instruments at its disposal, such as documentation. However, beyond evaluating programme performance merely from the documentation, Council members should be directly involved in a variety of programme activities. Such involvement would constitute one means of satisfying the need for information referred to by the representative of the Netherlands. It was particularly important for non-IPF members of the Council, whose participation in programme activities should be facilitated. Those countries could also take part in fund-raising activities, as indicated by the Administrator and the Executive Director of UNFPA. The newly established UNDP office in Poland was very active in that respect and received cooperation from individual UNDP donors and international and regional organizations.

55. Against that background, his delegation supported the proposals outlined in document DP/1991/3 and by the Secretary of the Council. The discussions concerning the high-level debate should be future-oriented, as should discussions of annual reports.

56. The possibilities of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters should be exploited to the fullest, particularly with regard to field visits for the purpose of on-the-spot verification of policy and programme implementation. The cost of such initiatives was not excessive compared with the cost of the consultations held to prepare the study on agency support costs.

57. Field visits would generate interest among local UNDP offices and Governments in issues dealt with by the Council, and that would strengthen the tripartite nature of the technical cooperation programme. The visits should not be too narrowly focused on the technical cooperation aspect. While reports on such visits would be directed to the Programme Committee, their findings could be considered by other bodies of the Council as well as under various agenda items. The missions could cover a variety of UNDP-sponsored field activities, including country, regional, interregional and global activities, and Special Programme Resources (SPRs).

58. Ms. DUDIK-GAYOSO (United States of America) said that the clustering of agenda items was helpful, as was the proposal to distinguish between reports for decision-making and information purposes. Her delegation had consistently believed that the high-level debate should focus on major policy issues, essentially those contained in the annual report of the Administrator.

(Ms. Dudik-Gayoso, United States)

59. Referring to paragraph 13 of document DP/1991/3, she said that there was no need for a high-level debate in June 1991, given the fact that, over the past two years, two major debates had already been held on topics that would guide UNDP in the 1990s. Her delegation's position on biennialization or triennialization would be contingent on receiving the list of items already requested by other delegations. Her delegation was concerned that certain important issues might be overlooked as a result of biennialization. In general, her delegation was not in favour of oral reports.

60. Efforts to rationalize the work of the Council would be greatly facilitated by interaction between the Bureau and Council members, and between the Bureau and the Secretariat. Her delegation welcomed the President's statement that he intended to act on the mandate given to the Bureau in Governing Council decision 81/37. Lastly, her delegation wished to acknowledge the considerable improvement in the quality of UNDP documentation in recent years.

61. Mr. HADID (Algeria) agreed that documentation should be reduced, but cautioned that a certain level and quality of information must none the less be maintained. Referring to paragraphs 12, 13, 14 and 15 of document DP/1991/3, he requested clarification as to whether the end result would not indeed be a general debate every year - one, in odd years, on the annual report of the Administrator and another, in even years, in conformity with decision 81/37.

62. Mr. SHOSI (Japan) said that his delegation appreciated the Administrator's proposals for rationalizing the work of the Council. His delegation supported the biennialization of certain agenda items in the hope that that would reduce lengthy discussions. While his delegation had hoped that the high-level debate could be held every three years, it could go along with the proposal to hold it every two years.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.